5: Blom & LaFarge A, E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajón

123 Visiting such a house is not a mere, simple social affair. Here,
648 on a steep-sided and slippery natural hill, lived a family belonging to a notoriously exclusive people. Our hostess seemed suspicious of the visit at first, although one visitor was a "Melicano," one of the pair who had already acquired a good reputation with the Indians, and his guide, Señor Aguilar, was known to be a friend. Men in felt hats and boots seldom visited those houses for good purposes; at the best, they might be expected to make off with a quantity of eggs and tortillas without paying their value—at the worst, the head of the house might be haled away for forced labour, or there might be a fight, the pigs killed, and the little hut set afire. The family consisted of a married couple their small son, and two grown girls. On our first visit the wife alone was there. She was at first sullen and a little frightened, but becoming reassured by degrees, showed herself to be a placid, dignified woman, pleasant, neat, and in many ways an ideal type of the traditional housewife. After we had given medicine to one of the girls for cold, and to the husband for mild fever, with a gaudy chromo of a saint to decorate the family altar, they came [342] to take us for granted, and allowed us to see unfolding the harmonious, dignified family life, with its feeling of unvoiced yet real affection that is so typical of the American Indian where European contact has been slight. The 342 little house, only half walled, and small—about 15 x 18½ feet—was [353] always neat, its dirt floor swept clean, each small posession in its • [356] place. There was a faint smell of wood-smoke and earth, with the scent of the rich jungle drifting in, the sound of low-voiced talk, wind in grass, or the grind and thump of the metates, now and then laughter.

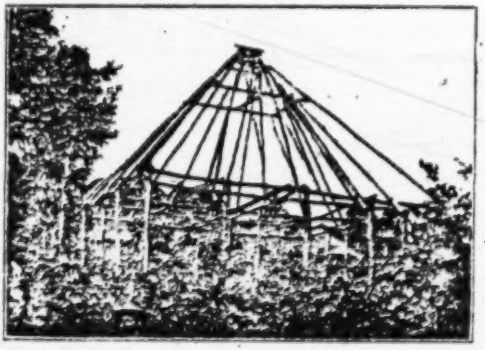

FIG. 287—Cancuc, Chis. Frame of house, illustrating type used in whole area.

The house was a rectangle, 4.90 x 4.20 meters (figs. 288-289), the front of the house being on a short side. The back and slightly less than half of the sides were walled with close-planted, upright [352] poles, without plastering. To wooden beds, *waixyivel*, like low tables, were built into the corners thus framed. Four corner-posts,

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajon
Tenango
Sivaca

342 The thatching was done by one man on the roof and another, who stood on a slanting stick tied to one of the center uprights, to help the first pass the liana around.

The angle of the long side not being steep enough, the roof leaked. Two men held the eaves-pole on their shoulders while the rest drove the corner posts in deeper, thus making the angle sharper and improving the shed.

[356] Repairs in thatch are made by laying new bundles of leaves directly over the old, the stems being stitched into the thatch with a liana, and a wooden needle made on the spot.

343 In all the larger settlements sweat-baths, *pus*, are located (figs. 295-296). The essential element is a cube of wattle thickly plastered

[291]

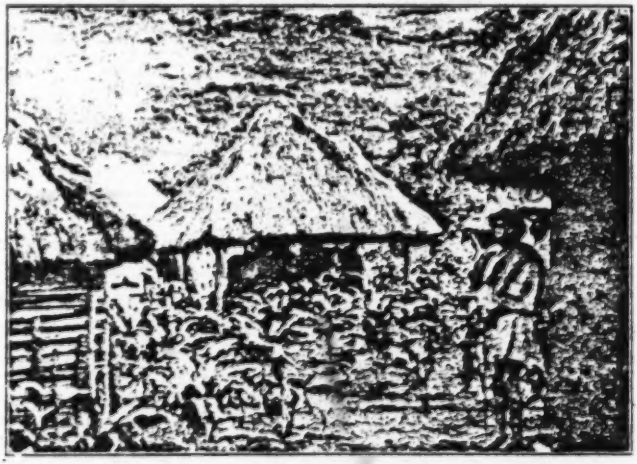

FIG. 295—Tenango, Chis. Sweat House of same type used in Ocosingo Valley.

with mud, about a meter to a meter and a half in all measurements, with a small doorway in one end. The door is of the same construction, or of boards. At Sivacá there were thatched roofs above the baths, but entirely separate from them. Water poured on hot stones is used in them. The purpose appears to be medicinal rather than ceremonial.

323 All the Highland Indians make vessels of clay, with the possible exception of the Tenejapeños. Among the Bachajon and at Sivacá, the art is not very well developed, only the most common [135] forms being made, without decoration. Their clay, *tcavek lum*, ("bees-wax earth"), is found in the banks of many small streams. It is a